

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION IN SOUTH INDIA

FOLLOWING TEL FROM MADRAS 0906 DTD 7 JULY 1975 SENT

ACTION NEW DELHI REPEATED YOU:

QUOTE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SITUATION IN SOUTH INDIA

1. THE MAJOR EVENT OF THE WEEKEND WAS THE MAMMOTH PUBLIC MEETING ON THE MARINA LAST NIGHT CALLED BY THE DMK TO EXPLAIN THE PARTY'S STAND ON THE EMERGENCY. WE ESTIMATE THE CROWD WHICH GATHERED ON THE SANDS AT 100,000 TO 150,000. THE DMK ORGAN, MURASOLI, CLAIMS 500,000. WHATEVER THE FIGURE, IT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THE LARGEST MEETINGS EVER HELD IN MADRAS; SOME OF OUR LOCAL EMPLOYEES SAY THERE HAS BEEN NOTHING COMPARABLE SINCE THE DEATH OF ANNADORAI. I DROVE BY WHILE THE MEETING WAS IN PROGRESS AND COULD NOT SEE THE SEA FOR THE PEOPLE. I WAS ALSO

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STRUCK BY THE FACT THAT THERE WERE NO BUSES AROUND; THEY CAME

INDIVIDUALLY UNDER THEIR OWN STEAM, MOSTLY ON FOOT. THE MEETING WAS ADDRESSED BY THE CHIEF MINISTER, EDUCATION MINISTER NEDUNCHEZHIAN, AND HEALTH MINISTER ANBAZHAGAN, THE DMK'S BIG THREE; SIGNIFICANTLY, ALL OF THE ADVANCE BILLING HAD AVOIDED ANY MENTION OF THEIR GOVERNMENT TITLES, REFERRING TO THEM EITHER BY THEIR PARTY NAMES OR SIMPLY AS THIRU (MR.) KARUNANIDHI, ETC.

2. KARUNANIDHI STRESSED THAT THE MEETING WAS NOT DIRECTED AGAINST PRIME MINISTER GANDHI, BUT WAS ORGANIZED TO "SAVE DEMOCRACY". HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE DMK HAD SUPPORTED ALL OF HER PROGRESSIVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS, HAD SUPPORTED HER PERSONALLY AND ALSO HER CANDIDATE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN 1969, AND TAMIL NADU UNDER THE DMK HAD COLLECTED MORE MONEY THAN ANY OTHER STATE IN INDIA TO THE CENTER'S WAR FUND AT THE TIME OF THE BANGLADESH WAR. THE DMK WAS ANXIOUS TO SEE DEMOCRACY SAVED, AND STILL BELIEVED THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD NOT LEAD THE COUNTRY TO DICTATORSHIP. THE DMK PARTY RESOLUTIONS HAD NOT ASKED THE DMK GOVERNMENT TO DISREGARD THE CENTER'S INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING THE EMERGENCY AND "WE WILL CARRY THEM OUT INSOFAR AS THEY DO NOT GO AGAINST OUR CONSCIENCE." KARUNANIDHI SAID THERE WAS NO NEED TO IMPOSE AN EMERGENCY NOW AS THERE WAS NO THREAT TO THE COUNTRY FROM EITHER EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL FORCES. HE CRITICIZED PRESS CENSORSHIP, SAYING IT WOULD ONLY LEAD TO THE SPREADING OF RUMORS AND THE LOSS OF POPULAR CONFIDENCE. KARUNANIDHI ALSO CRITICIZED THE CPI; "THEY PRETEND THEY ARE SUPPORTING THE GOI" BUT "THIS WILL ULTIMATELY LEAD TO THE INFILTRATION OF PRO-CPI ELEMENTS IN THE GOI WHICH WILL ULTIMATELY RESULT IN DICTATORSHIP IN INDIA." KARUNANIDHI ALSO ALLUDED TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT HIS GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE DISMISSED, NOTING HUMOROUSLY THAT HE HAD ASKED HIS MINISTERS TO WALK TO THE MEETING TO GET IN PRACTICE FOR THE DAY THEY MIGHT NO LONGER HAVE CARS.

3. NEDUNCHEZHIAN'S CRITICISMS WERE MORE DIRECT. STATING THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO DANGER TO INDIA UNTIL THE ALLAHABAD COURT'S JUDGMENT, HE ASKED WHO WAS IN DANGER BECAUSE OF THAT VERDICT--INDIRA GANDHI OR DEMOCRACY? HE ALSO QUOTED WOODROW WILSON AND LINCOLN ON HOW DEMOCRACY SHOULD FUNCTION AND SAID "WE HAVE TO LEARN FROM AMERICA...ALL DECISIONS MUST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BE MADE BY DISCUSSION AND NOT BY DICTATION." ANBAZHAGAN STRESSED THAT THE DMK GOVERNMENT HAD ALWAYS IMPLEMENTED THE DIRECTIVES OF THE CENTER AND WOULD CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT THEM DURING THE EMERGENCY. THE DMK, HE SAID, AS A RULING PARTY, HAD ITS RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PEOPLE; TODAY WE HAVE TO DEFEND AND SAVE DEMOCRACY.

4. THE CLIMAX CAME AT THE END, WHEN KARUNANIDHI ASKED THE

HUGE GATHERING TO TAKE A PLEDGE IN THE NAME OF ANNADORAI BY
STANDING AND REPEATING AFTER HIM: "THIS GATHERING AT THE SANDS
HEREBY PLEDGES TO PROTECT INDIAN DEMOCRACY UNDER ANY CIRCUM-
STANCES AND IN ANY EVENTUALITY. WE WILL SEE THAT NOTHING
HAPPENS TO INDIAN DEMOCRACY. WE ENDORSE THE DMK EXECUTIVE'S
RESOLUTION. WE APPEAL TO THE PRIME MINISTER TO RELEASE THE
ARRESTED LEADERS AND TO ENSURE REASONABLE FREEDOM OF THE
PRESS. LONG LIVE INDIAN DEMOCRACY." THE WHOLE AUDIENCE
STOOD AND REPEATED THE PLEDGE AS KARUNANIDHI READ IT OUT AND
THEN THEY DISPERSED. THEY APPEARED TO BE DEEPLY TOUCHED
WITH THIS SOLEMN ENDING.
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